In previous columns, I have mentioned the applicability of management by objective and management by walking around. It seems to me that another interdisciplinary perspective is that the venerable suggestion box, perhaps in a new electronic guise, can play a valuable role in information security improvements.

John Gehl and Suzanne Gehl edit a useful and concise newsletter called INNOVATION that reviews information technology & technology-management developments.

Recently, they summarized an article about intranet-based suggestion boxes. For example, they write, "...Bristol-Myers Squibb... invited its 30,000 employees to submit their ideas for innovation -- and received ... more than 5,000 ideas .... with new ideas for generating revenue, improving marketing, cutting costs and refining processes ... [resulting] in a million-dollar increase in revenue within one year of the suggestion system's implementation."

One of the best ways of increasing compliance with any policy is to involve people in adapting policy to their experiences and needs. A physical or electronic suggestion box is potentially an excellent tool for increasing involvement in security policies and their improvement.

At one company I visited years ago, employees who made money-saving or money-making suggestions were celebrated at the end of the year and the savings or increased earnings resulting from their ideas were posted in the factory along with pictures of the big checks (I remember one for $25,000) the individual employees had received as their share of the accrued benefits.

Because putting precise financial value on information assurance is impossible, it is not likely that those who offer particularly good suggestions are going to be up for financial prizes like the employees in the factory described above. However, it is certainly possible to thank people for their suggestions and even to make a fuss over those who have contributed especially insightful ideas with visible effects for improving security.

In summary, I think it's worth the minor effort involved in implementing a security suggestion box and encourage readers to try this idea.

Next year I will remind readers to send me their impressions of whether the experiment had any benefit for their organizations and will report on the findings.

* * *

See http://www.newsscan.com for more information about INNOVATION.

NEW! 18-month online Master of Science in Information Assurance offered by Norwich University; see <http://www3.norwich.edu/msia> for full details.

M. E. Kabay, PhD, CISSP is Associate Professor in the Department of Computer Information Systems at Norwich University in Northfield, VT. Mich can be reached by e-mail at <mailto:mkabay@norwich.edu>; Web site at <http://www.mekabay.com/index.htm>.

Copyright © 2003 M. E. Kabay. All rights reserved.

Permission is hereby granted to _Network World_ to distribute this article at will, to post it without limit on any Web site, and to republish it in any way they see fit.